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**FORTY-EIGHTH MEETING OF THE
COMMITTEE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF GOVERNMENTS AND
ADMINISTRATIONS**

(26–28 June 2018, Noumea, New Caledonia)

AGENDA ITEM No. 3: Pacific Community Centre for Ocean Science

(Paper presented by the Secretariat)

Summary

1. This paper presents an update on work to establish the Pacific Community Centre for Ocean Science (PCCOS).
2. The Tenth Conference of the Pacific Community approved the establishment of the centre to be hosted by SPC to commemorate its 70th anniversary.

Recommendation

3. CRGA is invited to note progress made to date to establish the Pacific Community Centre for Ocean Science.

Pacific Community Centre for Ocean Science

Purpose

4. This paper presents an update on the status of the establishment of the Pacific Community Centre for Ocean Science.

Background

5. At the Tenth Conference of the Pacific Community in 2017, the Secretariat presented a paper titled *Innovative partnerships for sustainable development*. The paper outlined some new ideas and existing relationships that are platforms that combine the concepts of partnership and innovation to promote sustainable development. One of the innovative concepts outlined in the paper was the establishment of a Centre for Ocean Science as an essential element of sustainable development in the Pacific.
6. The Tenth Conference approved the establishment of the Pacific Community Centre for Ocean Science to be hosted by SPC to commemorate its 70th anniversary.

Pacific Community Centre for Ocean Science (PCCOS)

7. The first phase of PCCOS is the establishment of a virtual centre that brings together all of SPC's internal scientific and technical expertise in ocean science.
8. PCCOS will become a flagship for scientific excellence and a dedicated regional information and knowledge hub that also brings together international expertise in ocean and fisheries science through strategic partnerships. The hub will ensure that information, knowledge and data across ocean science disciplines are available and accessible to SPC member countries and territories, and to partners, to inform evidence-based decisions on the sustainable management and conservation of their ocean resources and habitats.
9. PCCOS's scope includes partnerships with regional CROP¹ agencies, international organisations engaged in ocean science and key ocean research institutions.

Initial steps in establishing PCCOS

10. In August 2017, SPC informed the 19th Meeting of the Marine Sector Working Group in Honiara of the decision to establish the Centre for Ocean Science and expressed its wish to work in close partnership with CROP agencies in setting up the centre.
11. In September 2017, SPC developed a PCCOS concept brief for circulation at the Pacific Islands Forum meeting. The purpose of the brief was to connect PCCOS to the 'Blue Pacific' concept to inform evidence-based decisions to enhance stewardship and sustainable use of the ocean and its resources as an instrument of

¹ Council of Regional Organisations in the Pacific.

transformative change in the Pacific's sociocultural, political, and economic development.

12. A second PCCOS brief was developed for distribution to New York-based Pacific Islands Ambassadors during the United Nations General Assembly in November 2017. The brief focused on the potential contribution of PCCOS to achieving Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.
13. At the 20th Meeting of the Marine Sector Working Group in Noumea in April 2018, SPC presented an update on the initial steps taken to establish PCCOS.

Funding

14. Securing funding for the PCCOS initiative has been difficult. In February 2018, funding support was provided under the SPC Innovation Fund as a component of a larger PCCOS-led scientific research project on methylmercury² contamination in Pacific fish and the associated environmental, ecological and human health risks. A total of EUR 137,000 has been allocated for PCCOS under the project, which came into effect on 15 March 2018.
15. Under the leadership of the Director of SPC's FAME Division, staff of FAME, GEM and CCES,³ with inputs from Information Services and the Melanesian Regional Office, have formed a PCCOS Project Board. The team has developed an agreed framework for PCCOS, initiated discussions with strategic research partners such as IRD,⁴ identified pilot projects, developed a proof of concept for the knowledge portal, and is facilitating implementation of the next steps.

First PCCOS project

16. The PCCOS-led research project on methylmercury contamination in Pacific fish is already underway with samples of tuna being tested in partnership with IRD. The research requires a multidisciplinary effort to assess contamination level, to consider the effects of long-term, high levels of fish consumption, and consequences for human health. A comprehensive review of current information is being undertaken to inform an international workshop on methylmercury research to be hosted by SPC in Noumea (19–23 November 2018). The intended outcome of that workshop is a strategic research plan that integrates current evidence, key priorities for the region and the capacity of potential programme partners to establish a regional-scale, long-term research programme.

² Methylmercury is a neurotoxin (mercury is included in the World Health Organization's top 10 chemicals of 'major public health concern'). Humans are exposed to methylmercury mainly through consuming fish and other seafood.

³ FAME: Fisheries, Aquaculture and Marine Ecosystems Division; GEM: Geoscience, Energy and Maritime Division; and CCES: Climate Change and Environmental Sustainability Programme.

⁴ Institut français de recherche pour le développement.

Next steps

17. ICT's 'One SPC' data project team is working on a PCCOS e-portal project with a live demonstration version to be available by June and development to continue for the rest of the year. The PCCOS knowledge portal will be an important thematic area under the One SPC Data and Knowledge Portal.
18. A consultant is about to be engaged to develop a ten-year PCCOS strategy with guidance from the PCCOS Project Board. The process will include consultations with SPC members on their needs for ocean information and science and their potential contribution.
19. Following the consultations, an initial sub-regional needs analysis will be undertaken. The needs assessment will be expanded if additional funding is identified.
20. A PCCOS coordinator will be engaged on a short-term contract to manage the development of the e-portal and implementation of the ten-year strategy.
21. Mobilisation of resources for PCCOS as part of a larger integrated SPC project is currently being explored with potential donor partners. Initial steps towards establishing PCCOS partnership agreements have been discussed with CROP agencies and key international ocean research institutions including IRD.
22. The table below outlines planned PCCOS activities up to February 2019.

PCCOS activities	2018										2019	
	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb
Hire high-level PCCOS consultant												
Country needs assessment												
Desktop scoping assessment report												
Presentation of draft PCCOS 10 year strategy												
Draft PCCOS strategy												
Final submission of PCCOS 10 year strategy												
Develop PCCOS e-portal												
Recruit position to manage e-portal and implement PCCOS strategy												
PCCOS resource mobilisation and partnerships												
Close PCCOS innovation project												

23. A progress update on work carried out between April and June will be provided at CRGA 48.

Recommendation

24. CRGA is invited to note progress made to date to establish the Pacific Community Centre for Ocean Science.